

Faith & Inspiration

No Substitutions Allowed



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By Vincent V. Marshburn -

The 19th century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote one of the most famous statements representing a foundation for secular inclinations in modern thought: "God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!" As an atheist, Nietzsche did not actually believe there could be a God in the first place. What he was describing was the decline of spiritual belief and erosion of reliance on supernatural explanations for reality.

On the one hand, Nietzsche concluded this meant that we, as human beings, would increasingly come to devise our own set of values by which to guide our existence. At the same time, he expressed concern that such a trend would lead to pessimism

and nihilism. In this, he was not wrong. Part of what Nietzsche was suggesting is that ultimately humanity aspires to insert itself into the role of God as the arbiter of veracity and virtue. He was essentially echoing the account of the fall and degradation of humanity as described in the Bible.

One could recognize a certain sense of irony in the notion of human beings attempting to supplant God in the established order of creation. After all, throughout the Bible it is indicated that we are specifically created in the image of our creator (Genesis 1:26-27, 5:1-2, 9:6; Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24; James 3:9). That is, we possess by design various qualities that represent God's own nature, and it was intended from the beginning that we should reflect God's character in manifesting his gift of life.

We observe that the initial sin of humanity is prompted by a desire to formulate our own conceptions of right and wrong. The Serpent insinuated that the

withholding of the fruit of the tree of knowledge was an effort to suppress our inherently divine capacity. "For God knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:5)

Of course, the problem was not becoming like God — we were already made in his image. Our downfall was the hubris of believing we could assume God's jurisdiction of defining truth and concluding we should derive our own insight into any such knowledge.

Throughout history, humanity has pursued the ambition of not merely embodying God's nature (which in itself is no mean feat), but of essentially usurping his title and authority of sovereignty. The root of our rebellion is the pretension of superseding the need for dependency upon any heavenly source of understanding.

Various ancient civilizations often espoused a semblance of God or gods in human form. From Babylon to Egypt to Greece to Rome,

we readily observe evidence of those who seemed to take Psalm 82:6 literally ("you are gods"). While this passage is intended to convey the responsibility and accountability of human leaders in positions of governance, even to this day there are those who regard their presumed endowment of divine inception as an entitlement to the status of deity.

In an early episode of the original "Star Trek" television series, the USS Enterprise is on a course to reach the edge of our galaxy when it detects a recorded distress signal. The signal is originating from a flight recorder that appears to be the only remains of the SS Valiant, an "ancient" spaceship launched in the 21st century. Determined to investigate the nature of the disaster which befell the Valiant, Captain James Kirk orders the Enterprise to continue out beyond the Milky Way.

The crew soon encounters a strange energy field or barrier which inflicts some damage to the Enterprise while also incapacitating a couple officers on the

bridge — helmsman Gary Mitchell and Dr. Elizabeth Dehner. As it happens, these particular individuals had previously been tested to demonstrate a predisposition for "extra-sensory perception" or enhanced mental abilities (e.g., telepathy, telekinesis, precognition). The downed officers are revived, and though both Mitchell and Dehner appear to be physically all right, Mitchell seems to be displaying further enhancement of his formerly latent psychic abilities.

Mitchell begins to quickly absorb a significant amount of information from the ship's available data storage due to an apparently elevated level of intellect. He also begins to discern things which are not in his direct line of sight and to move objects without touching them, even at a distance. Concurrently with these growing capabilities, Mitchell develops a decidedly arrogant sense of superiority, exercising his powers at his whim.

It is not long before Mitchell becomes a threat to the ship and its crew, as he perceives that his colleagues are now so far beneath him. He insists that he should be set loose upon the galaxy, declaring himself to be essentially a god. The Enterprise is able to reach a nearby planet, and Mitchell attempts to persuade Dehner to join him in his "ascension," since she was also presumably affected by the energy field and would begin to exhibit similar abilities. Kirk confronts Dehner and urges her to help him stop Mitchell's progression towards megalomania.

**KIRK:** Will he know what to do with his power? Will he acquire the wisdom?

**DEHNER:** Please go back while you still can.

**KIRK:** Did you hear him joke about compassion? Above all else, a god needs compassion....

**DEHNER:** Go back. **KIRK:** You were a psychiatrist once. You know the ugly, savage things we all keep buried, that none of us dare expose. But he'll dare. Who's to stop him? He doesn't need to care. Be a psychiatrist for one minute longer. What do you see happening to him? What's your prognosis, Doctor? **DEHNER:** He's coming. **(MITCHELL appears.)** **MITCHELL:** I'm disappointed in you, Elizabeth. **DEHNER:** Stop it, Gary. **MITCHELL:** Morals are for men, not gods. **KIRK:** A god, but still driven by human frailty. Do you like what you see? **MITCHELL:** Time to pray, Captain. Pray to me ...

When Mitchell attempts to kill Kirk, Dehner turns her own powers against the deranged man. As Mitchell strikes back at Dehner, mortally wounding her, Kirk is able to dispatch Mitchell in a rockslide. With her dying words, Dehner apologizes and expresses regret at succumbing to the temptation of godhood.

The Bible is replete with warnings and admonitions regarding such thirst for supremacy, including a condemnation against any ruler who would indulge the thought to "make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:12-14). Jesus himself resisted the temptation to pursue worldly power, opting instead for utter devotion to the Father (Matthew 4:9-10; Luke 4:5-8).

Ultimately, the Bible is clear about the futility of human beings trying to replace God with anything else, including themselves. Scripture unequivocally insists that there is only one God and nothing can ever take his place (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 46:9; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:5). When it comes to God, there are no substitutions allowed.

Inspiring Ladies of Legacy Leaders

By Charlie Hudson -

The annual South Dade Chamber of Commerce Ladies Of Legacy Leadership Luncheon was Thursday, March 20th, 2025, held at the Miccosukee Casino & Resort to another sold-out crowd.

Yordy Rivero, with HR Benefits and the current South Dade Chamber of Commerce Chair, welcomed guests and briefly outlined the program, which included an invocation by Chaplain (Major) Sarah Parris. Miccosukee Casino & Resort General Manager Brad Rhines introduced the facility. Sponsors and selected others were also acknowledged before the central part of the event.

Lucia Soria, owner and President of Ram-Tech Construction, served as moderator for the six-member panel of

notable women.

Soria, a longtime National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) member, and ardent agriculture advocate had held numerous leadership roles in multiple organizations. Among the organizations she supports is PATCHES, PPEC, whose Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Azona "Kyle" Smith, was a panelist.

PATCHES, "a place where miracles happen every day," is a unique medical facility established in 2000 to provide daycare for medically complex children to "positively impact the lives of the of the littlest, weakest, and sickest children of South Dade" while also bringing invaluable service to parents.

In a spectrum of

business, civic, and non-profit role models, Cristina Pelaez, Attorney/Owner of Pelaez Maas Law and Miami native, has impressive credentials in the practice of Real Estate, Estate Planning, and Business Law.

She represents domestic and foreign individuals and entities, developing personalized approaches to her clients' needs.

Julie Romero - Regional Area Manager, SouthState Bank - whose banking career and civic/community involvement are well-known in South Dade, has been with Community Bank, subsequent transitions into CenterState, and now SouthState Bank.

She has served in numerous leadership positions, including the past chair of the Chamber



Lucia Soria, center, introduced the 2025 Ladies of Legacy Panel. Left to right behind her, Cristina Pelaez, Julie Romero, Azona "Kyle" Smith, Suzanne Jewel, Francesca de Quesada Covey, Michelle Shirley.

Photo courtesy SDOC, Photo by LULU

of Commerce and the past chair of the Homestead Kiwanis Club. She is also active in the St. Louis Catholic Church.

Michelle Shirley, CEO of Be Strong International, began with

the non-profit organization in 2005 as a program and office manager.

Her astute, multi-discipline skills have significantly enhanced the annual budget and earned her

recognition as a frontline leader in the community, a champion for optimal workplace culture, and a mentor.

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